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ABSTRACT

This document comprises an evaluation of the 1987/88 expansion of Project Giant Step, a comprehensive preschool program for 4-year-olds, to 75 additional classrooms in 37 New York City schools, funded under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act. Information was collected from application forms, attendance data, classroom logs and rosters, and site visits to 26 classrooms in 13 randomly selected schools. Staff included 23 teacher specialists, who supervised and coordinated activities, and a half-time social worker or psychologist for every 120 students. Two early childhood supervisors provided technical assistance and acted as liaisons to the New York City Board of Education. Classroom staff included a teacher, an educational assistant, and a family assistant. Children attended half-day sessions with a capacity for 20 students per classroom; average daily attendance per classroom was 10.5. The following findings are reported: (1) all classrooms were well equipped; (2) children were observed using materials and equipment that maximized opportunities for peer interaction; (3) teachers were engaged with students in developmentally appropriate activities; (4) the program met standards for quality educational experiences as set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); and (5) attendance was low. Recommendations for improving attendance and communication are suggested. Seventeen tables of statistical data and a chart illustrating the organization and lines of communication within the project are included. Copies of the forms used to gather classroom information and a list of 10 references are appended. (FMW)

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OREA Report

PROJECT GIANT STEP CHAPTER I PROGRAM
1987-88

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OREA Evaluation Section Report
John Schoener, Administrator
August 1989

PROJECT GIANT STEP CHAPTER I PROGRAM
1987-88

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SUMMARY

Project Giant Step is a comprehensive preschool program for four-year-olds. It provides an educational program and health and nutrition services for children, and supportive social services for children and their families. Project Giant Step is coordinated by the Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education and administered through the Agency for Child Development and the New York City Board of Education. Created in 1986, Project Giant Step began its second year of operation in September 1987 and expanded to an additional 75 classrooms in 37 New York City public schools. The program was initially located in 28 classrooms in 14 schools. All sites that opened in 1987-88 were established in Chapter I schools following all Chapter I guidelines. OREA's 1987-88 evaluation focused primarily on the implementation of Project Giant Step in the new sites.

Project staff included 23 teacher specialists, who coordinated and supervised project activities, and a half-time or equivalent social worker or psychologist for every 120 children enrolled in the program. New to 1987-88 project staff were two early childhood supervisors who provided a link to the New York City Board of Education and technical assistance for the teacher specialists. Classroom staff included a teacher, an educational assistant, and a family assistant. Children attended daily half-day class sessions from 8:40 to 11:40 A.M., or from 12:00 to 3:00 P.M. The 75 classrooms provided space for 3,000 students, with a maximum of 20 students per classroom.

All Giant Step classrooms were well equipped. Children were observed using materials and equipment that maximized opportunities for interaction with their peers. Teachers were engaged with children in developmentally appropriate activities. When compared against National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards, Project Giant Step was deemed successful in providing quality educational experiences.

Because attendance has remained low, OREA recommends further research into the reasons for low attendance; careful monitoring of attendance, and development of school-based strategies for the improvement of attendance. OREA also recommends improving communication by Project Giant Step personnel to district and school-based personnel through preservice activities designed to clarify the philosophy of the project and to delineate the roles of the Project Giant Step staff in relation to the school staff.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In March 1986, the Early Childhood Education Commission, appointed by the Mayor of New York City, recommended that the city make quality educational programs universally available to all four-year-olds in public school prekindergarten classrooms and in similar classes in preschool programs operated by the Agency for Child Development (ACD). The new comprehensive prekindergarten initiative, named Project Giant Step, began in September 1986. Project Giant Step was coordinated by the Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education and administered through the central offices of the Board of Education and ACD. In addition to a developmentally appropriate half-day educational program for children, Project Giant Step provided supportive health and social services to children and their families. It also encouraged parents to become active partners in their children's education.

Twenty-eight Project Giant Step classrooms opened in 14 elementary schools located in six different community school districts in October 1986. The Office of Educational Assessment examined program implementation during Project Giant Step's first year of operation and concluded that the programs agreed with project guidelines in the areas of pupil recruitment and enrollment, project supervision and staffing, educational programming for children, staff development, parental involvement, and supportive health and social services.

In September 1987, the program expanded to an additional 37 schools in 14 community school districts. The 75 new classrooms provided space for an additional 3,000 children. Table 1 shows the numbers of districts, schools, classrooms and children involved in Project Giant Step during the 1987-88 school year.

TABLE 1

Numbers of Community School Districts, Schools, Classrooms, and Children in Project Giant Step Board of Education Programs, 1987-88

	Community School Districts	Schools	Classrooms	Children
Veteran Sites	6	14	28	1120
New Sites	13	37	75	3000
Total	19	51	103	4120

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In 1987-88, Project Giant Step continued to be coordinated by the Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education and administered through the central offices of ACD and the New York City Board of Education. Within the Board of Education, community school district superintendents supervised the program in their districts. An Early Childhood liaison in each district office served as a link between the district, the Early Childhood Education Unit at the central Board of Education, and the Project

Giant Step schools. Project staff included teacher specialists, who coordinated and supervised project activities; a teacher, educational assistant, and family assistant for each classroom; and a half-time or equivalent social worker or psychologist for every 120 children enrolled in the program. Children attended half-day class sessions either from 8:40 to 11:40 A.M., or from 12:00 to 3:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

THE 1987-88 EVALUATION

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (formerly known as the Office of Educational Assessment) assessed implementation of the Project Giant Step public school programs that were launched during the 1987-88 school year. The 14 veteran sites also participated in a longitudinal evaluation of program implementation and its effects on children and families. This outside evaluation which was contracted through the city's Office of Management and Budget was conducted within the Board of Education and ACD sites by ABT Associates, Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Evaluation Questions

The OREA implementation study addressed the following questions:

- What were the characteristics of the students in project classes? How were they recruited and selected for enrollment?
- What were the characteristics of the project staff? What was their prior experience and training?

- What preservice and inservice training was provided to project staff? How did the staff assess the various staff development activities offered centrally and in the districts? What was the impact of training upon classroom practice?

- What was the educational program for children regarding schedule, equipment and materials, classroom arrangement, classroom activities, and adult/child interaction? How did the program meet the different needs of individual children?

- How did project staff involve parents in their children's education? What activities were planned for parents?

Data Collection

Data were collected for this report in several ways. First, information about the children and their families was available from the program application forms which parents had completed when they registered their children for the program. Secondly, the Board of Education's Student Information Services provided attendance data. Project Giant Step staff also submitted class rosters and logs of staff and parent activities.

To assess classroom implementation, OREA field consultants observed 26 Giant Step classrooms in 13 randomly selected schools. The classroom observations focused on the type and frequency of activities, materials used, grouping patterns, and interactions between children and adults. The observations were divided evenly between morning and afternoon sessions.

During the site visits, OREA field consultants also conducted structured interviews with all teacher specialists, classroom teachers, educational assistants, social workers/psychologists, family assistants, and school principals.

These interviews included questions about each individual's previous experience and goals, perceptions of the implementation of Project Giant Step in its first year, individual assessments of staff development activities, and recommendations for the future.

The Evaluation Report

The following report presents findings concerning program implementation in Project Giant Step sites which opened in 1987-1988. Chapter II describes the children and families who participated in the program in the new sites. Chapter III focuses on the staffing of the program, the roles and relationships within the program, and the impact of staff development. Chapter IV discusses the implementation of the educational component in Project Giant Step classrooms. Parent involvement and supportive services for families is discussed in Chapter V. The final chapter contains conclusions and recommendations.[1]

[1]The 1986-87 evaluation report contains extensive discussion of issues related to program organization and staffing, classroom scheduling, parent involvement, and social services. Findings about the program which remained essentially the same have not been repeated in this report. Readers who want more information are advised to read: O.E.A., Project Giant Step Final Report 1986-87.

II. PROJECT GIANT STEP CHILDREN

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Program staff continued to use a variety of methods to notify parents of eligible four-year-olds that Project Giant Step was available in their districts. Methods for publicizing the program included: flyers, posters, radio and newspaper announcements, notification of public agencies and local religious institutions, and door-to-door canvassing. The staff also contacted key community members who were able to inform parents of potentially eligible children.

On the program application form, parents indicated how they learned about the program. Almost half, or 45.6 percent, of the parents had heard about the program from a friend, 22.8 percent had received a flyer about the program, and 14.4 percent reported having seen poster advertisements. The more formal means of informing the public--newspaper, radio, referral from public agencies, or from houses of worship--accounted for only 8.8 percent of applicants.

ENROLLMENT

The average monthly enrollment in the new sites is shown in Table 2. Enrollment ranged from a low of 2,003 students (66.8 percent of capacity) in November 1987--the month the program opened--to a high in May 1988 of 2,256 students (75.2 percent of capacity). The overall average monthly enrollment for the new sites was 2,169 students, which amounted to slightly less than

three-quarters of capacity. Although space was available for 20 children, the average class enrollment was 14.5 students because of underenrollment.

TABLE 2

Average Monthly Enrollment at New Program Sites, Project Giant Step, 1987-88

Month	Mean Enrollment	Percent of Capacity	Average Class Size
October	--	--	--
November	2,003	67	13.5
December	2,083	69	14.0
January	2,137	71	14.2
February	2,176	73	14.5
March	2,213	74	14.9
April	2,235	75	14.9
May	2,256	75	15.0
June	2,249	75	14.9
Yearly Average	2,169	72	14.5

Data collected by OREA show that enrollment tends to be low in Project Giant Step classrooms during the first few months after the establishment of a new site. However, enrollment in Project Giant Step increases during the second year of program operation. For example, in November, 1988 all Project Giant Step sites contained

higher enrollments than in November, 1987. During this period, the second- and third-year programs obtained enrollments of 85.7 and 84.7 percent of capacity respectively. The new sites that opened in 1988 had an average enrollment of up to 63.4 percent of total capacity.

Most project staff where classes were underenrolled believed enrollment was low because so many parents preferred full-day classes. Some teachers also felt that efforts to recruit children could be improved, while educational and family assistants blamed low enrollment on the program's late start in November after most other preschool programs were already in operation.

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE

The average attendance rate for new sites in 1987-88 was 73 percent. Although equipped for 20 children, classrooms averaged a mere 10.5 students present daily.

To place these results in perspective, the attendance rates for Project Giant Step were compared with those for all public school half-day prekindergarten programs. The average daily attendance rate for all Board of Education half-day prekindergarten programs was higher (77.4 percent) than that in Project Giant Step classrooms (72.7 percent).

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Nearly equal numbers of boys (51.4 percent) and girls (48.4 percent) attended Project Giant Step classes. Their ages ranged from 3.9 to 4.8 years; the average child was 4.3 years old at the beginning of the school year. The children came from

predominantly minority populations: 44.2 percent were African-American, 37.3 percent were Latino, 12.2 percent were white, and 3.2 percent were Asian. The remaining 3.1 percent belonged to other groups.

Family Income

Almost all parents of children (91.3 percent) enrolled in Project Giant Step's new classrooms either reported that they received food stamps, or that they had incomes low enough to qualify the children for free lunch. Most of the children (88 percent) received free meals; an additional six percent qualified for reduced-price meals. Family income varied substantially by ethnic background, as shown in Table 3. Lower family incomes were reported by Latino and African-American families more frequently than by white and Asian families.

TABLE 3

Average Income and Food Stamp Eligibility by Ethnic Background of Project Giant Step Families, 1987-88

Ethnicity	Number of Families	Average Income	Number of Families	Percent Reporting Food Stamp Eligibility (N=1324)
African-American	441	10,856	190	11.8%
Latino	475	9,894	185	11.0
White	159	17,310	1	0.0
Asian	83	13,731	2	0.0
Am. Indian	5	18,848	1	0.0
Other	177	12,177	25	1.5

'Number of families for whom data were available.

Most children (68.3 percent) lived in households of three to five persons. The average household contained 4.4 members, and 17.7 percent of children lived in households with more than six people.

Home Language and Proficiency in English

Most parents (63 percent) reported that English was the language used by their children at home; 30.4 percent spoke Spanish at home. A few children spoke Haitian/Creole (1.3 percent) or Chinese (1.2 percent). The remaining 4.1 percent spoke a variety of other languages at home, including Greek, Hindi, Urdu, and Yiddish.

Unlike older children, prekindergarten children are not tested for proficiency in English. In May near the end of the school year, seven of the 26 classroom teachers reported that no children in their classrooms had any difficulty understanding or speaking English. In the other 19 classrooms, which included four bilingual classes, the teachers identified a modest number of children who had problems understanding and speaking English (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

Percentage of Children with Problems Understanding and Speaking English as Reported by Project Giant Step Teachers, 1987-88

Problems Reported	Number of Children With Problems	Percent of Children With Problems (N=764)
Describing Events in English	65	8.5%
Participating in Group Discussions	52	6.8
Following Stories	50	6.5
Following Verbal Directions	48	6.3

Children With Special Needs

Parents were asked to report on the Project Giant Step application form any of the children's conditions which would require special help or attention at school. Few parents (9.8 percent) said that their children had any special needs or conditions. The conditions described by parents ranged from mild allergies or the need for prescription glasses to more pronounced special needs, such as speech impairment.

Classroom teachers were asked to report the number of children they perceived as having needs which "required further

attention." As indicated in Table 5, the most common problems identified by teachers were difficulty in speech and language and aggressive and acting-out behavior. Teachers reported some children with problems or needs in several other areas, for example, motor and hearing problems. It should be noted that according to the teachers, almost nine percent of the children had special talents or were intellectually gifted.

All but one teacher said they modified class activities to meet the individual needs of the children. Most teachers (65 percent) reported that they worked individually with these children.

TABLE 5

Percentage of Students in the Observation Sample With Special Needs Reported by Project Giant Step Teachers, 1987-88

Needs Requiring Further Attention	Number of Children	Percentage of Children* (N =764)
Speech/Language Problems	75	9.8
Extensive acting out/aggression	71	9.3
Problems with peer relations	65	8.5
Cognitive/Learning Problems	48	6.3
Withdrawn/Shy	46	6.2
Motor Problems	43	5.6
Hearing/Vision Problems	28	3.7
Health Problems	25	3.3
Gifted and Talented	67	8.8

*Some children were reported to have needs in more than one category.

Within Project Giant Step, additional supportive services for children and their families are provided by non-classroom staff--family workers, teacher specialists, social workers, and psychologists. Unfortunately, three sites were unable to hire a social worker or a psychologist because of an unavailability of trained personnel. Some teachers reported that they had contacted sources outside the program such as members of the School-Based Support Teams for additional assistance.

III. PROGRAM STAFF AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

STAFFING

As in the previous year, districts hired one full-time teacher assigned as teacher specialist for every three prekindergarten classrooms in 1987-88. Twenty-three teacher specialists were hired to supervise the 75 new classrooms. Two teacher specialists were not hired until February 1988, and one left before the end of the school year. As a result, some teacher specialists had to take on additional responsibilities.

Each classroom was staffed by a teacher, an educational assistant, and a family assistant. As of May 1988, there were 75 teachers, 74 educational assistants, and 72 family assistants. Half-time or equivalent social workers could be hired for every 120 children (or three classrooms). By May 1988, nine of the 12 social worker positions had been filled.

The teacher specialists reported difficulty recruiting and hiring personnel who had appropriate early childhood training and experience. Several teacher specialists proposed creating a central information bank of available early childhood personnel. Such an information bank would be helpful in: (a) hiring Project Giant Step staff; (b) identifying substitute teachers; and (c) replacing kindergarten teachers and other school staff who had transferred from other school positions to work in Project Giant Step.

They also believed that new job descriptions identifying precise qualifications were needed. For example, although

initial job descriptions required family assistants to maintain constant and direct contact with parents, skill in interpersonal relations was not specified as a qualification.

Project administration and supervision did not change much from 1986-87 to 1987-88. The roles of all Project Giant Step staff and their relationships with the school principals and district office staffs are discussed thoroughly in the 1986-87 evaluation report. The role of the central early childhood supervisor, a position newly created in 1987-88, is described in this report. Figure 1 shows the formal lines of supervision and communication within Project Giant Step in 1987-88.

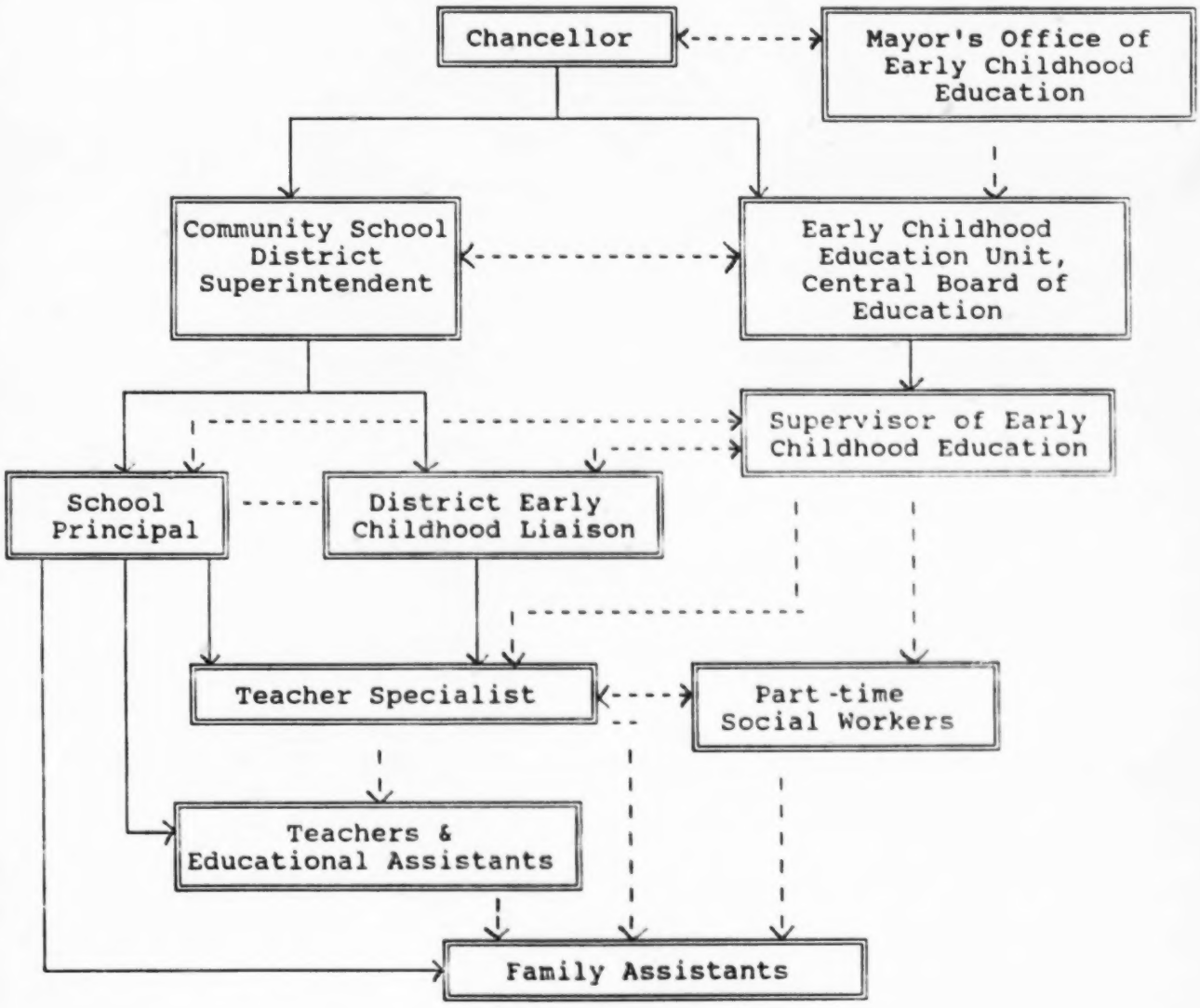
Early Childhood Supervisors

Two early childhood supervisors were hired in the Early Childhood Education Unit at the central Board of Education to act as liaisons between the central office and the increased number of program sites. According to the early childhood supervisors, at the time of employment their functions, roles, and responsibilities had not been clearly delineated either within the central office or within the districts to which they were assigned.

Their major tasks included assisting the teacher specialists in establishing developmentally appropriate classrooms and working with the Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education to implement citywide preservice and inservice training. However, they reported that administrative duties, such as assuring that

FIGURE 1

ORGANIZATION OF SUPERVISION AND
LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN
PROJECT GIANT STEP, 1987-88



Formal Supervisory Line ————————
Communication Line ----------

district budgets were in place and that staff was hired to fill vacant positions, consumed major portions of their time.

Because their positions were new, they had to establish working relationships with personnel within the central offices, the districts, and the schools. As both supervisors stated, many district-level personnel and school principals were not yet convinced of the benefits to be gained by adding prekindergarten classes in their schools. Initially many principals were also reluctant to allow the Central Board supervisors into their schools, and had to be convinced that they were not there to monitor compliance, but to assist the teacher specialist in establishing developmentally appropriate classrooms.

Few principals understood early childhood program goals and curriculum because they lacked training in early childhood education and philosophy. In one school, the principal assigned a sixth grade cluster teacher to work in Giant Step classrooms. When the cluster teacher said she was unsure what to do with the children, the principal said: "Well, just let them draw." To remedy situations such as this, one Early Childhood supervisor suggested providing information to district supervisors and school principals either through direct training or through periodic newsletters about early childhood education in New York City.

Even though assisting teacher specialists was one of their major tasks, the Early Childhood supervisors were sometimes unable to establish direct communication with them. Within the

districts, the Early Childhood Liaisons supervised the teacher specialists. In the beginning, contact between the supervisors and specialists was usually mediated by the District Early Childhood Liaison. The process became problematic for teacher specialists who needed immediate assistance and were unsure as to what extent they could directly ask the Early Childhood supervisors for help.

As trust developed between various program staff as the school year progressed, the communication lines became more flexible. Eventually, the Early Childhood supervisors were able to communicate directly with the classroom teaching staff. One of the Early Childhood supervisors stated that some teachers asked for help directly. She assisted them with their specific problems while she worked with the teacher specialist to continue the process. Both Early Childhood supervisors indicated that they also designed and provided training for family assistants.

Both supervisors believed that working with school principals represented their major impact. One felt she enabled principals to become more active in encouraging the parents' involvement in their child's education. The other Early Childhood supervisor felt she had enabled district office staff and school principals to see that Project Giant Step was part of the district and the school rather than a separate entity.

STAFF EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE

According to program guidelines, all early childhood supervisors, teacher specialists, and teachers hired for the program were to have had previous experience working with young children.

Both of the early childhood supervisors had degrees in Early Childhood Education and certificates in administration and supervision. They had worked in day care facilities and in public school early childhood classrooms. One supervisor had more than 25 years of early childhood classroom experience, while the other had eight years of experience with grades two through four and six years as a trainer of early childhood paraprofessionals.

As shown in Table 6, almost all of the teachers (96 percent) and teacher specialists (83 percent) had previous teaching experience at the preschool level. In addition, many of the teachers (62 percent) and teacher specialists (68 percent) had also taught kindergarten.

The guidelines state that early childhood experience is preferable for educational assistants. Although educational assistants had more experience working with first and second grades, almost half (42 percent) had worked with preschool children, and 38 percent had worked in kindergarten classrooms.

TABLE 6

Number of Years of Early Childhood Teaching Experience of Project Giant Step Staff, by Position, and by Grade, 1987-88

Years of Experience and Grade	Teacher Specialists (N = 12)	Teachers (N = 26)	Educational Assistants (N = 26)
Preschool			
1 - 5 years	41.6%	50.0%	38.5%
6 -10	25.0	34.6	3.8
7 -10	16.7	11.5	0
Total	83.3%	96.1%	42.3%
Kindergarten			
1 - 5 years	33.3%	46.1%	11.2%
6 -10	8.4	7.6	19.5
7 -10	25.0	7.7	0
Total	66.7%	61.4%	30.7%
First Grade			
1 - 5 years	50.0%	46.2%	27.0%
6 -10	8.3	7.6	3.8
7 -10	0	0	11.5
Total	58.3%	53.8%	42.3%
Second Grade			
1 - 5 years	50.0%	30.8%	30.8%
6 -10	0	0	7.6
7 -10	8.3	3.8	0
Total	58.3%	34.6%	38.4%

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Project Giant Step guidelines in 1987-88 mandated that all new staff receive 20 days of preservice staff development, and that two days each month be reserved for in-service staff development throughout the school year.

Pre-service Training

Between October 9 and November 10, 1987, a series of preservice training activities sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education and the Board of Education's Early Childhood Education Unit were held at Columbia University (five days), Board of Education training sites (three days), and at the Center For Educational Leadership (two days). On days when no formal training activities took place, staff were to recruit and register children, plan curriculum, and set up their classrooms. The major topics addressed during the preservice training were:

- Early Childhood Philosophy: the value of play, emerging literacy, goals and philosophy, and classroom arrangement;
- Prekindergarten Curriculum: block building, creative arts, children's literature, music and movement, mathematics, dramatic play, and outdoor play;
- Child Development Theory: learning stages, skills and activities for four-year-olds, language development;
- Working with Multi-cultural Populations: implications for children and families; working with limited English proficient children; the relationship between home and school;
- Developing a Classroom Plan.

The out-of-classroom staff, family assistants, social workers, psychologists, and teacher specialists participated in a one-day training session, which focused on team building.

All staff hired prior to preservice training--77 percent of the teachers and educational assistants, 50 percent of the teacher specialists, and 43 percent of the family assistants--attended the preservice training sessions.

Inservice Training

Classes for children were not held on the first and third Friday of each month. These two monthly nonattendance days were set aside for in-service staff development activities. One of the primary functions of the Board's Early Childhood supervisors was to facilitate inservice training: they planned central training activities with the Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education and worked at the district- and school-level through their on-going work with the teacher specialists. In some instances, the supervisors felt they needed to help teacher specialists make the transition from classroom teachers to staff developers responsible for training other teachers.

Most of the Project Giant Step staff attended almost all of the central inservice training (83 percent of the teacher specialists, 88 percent of the teachers, 84 percent of the educational assistants, and 86 percent of the family assistants). About half of the teacher specialists, teachers, and family assistants thought the training was appropriate to their roles and responsibilities within the project. Educational

assistants found the training most helpful; 68 percent ranked it as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities. According to the family assistants and educational assistants, the central training helped them mostly to gain an understanding of the educational philosophy upon which Project Giant Step is based. Educational assistants found that the training helped them develop a deeper understanding of young children, of the purpose and aims of the prekindergarten curriculum, and of how to function as a member of a classroom team. Although the family assistants found the inservice training useful in terms of team building, they rated it least effective in helping them develop the skills they needed to work with children and families.

Staff suggestions for improving nonattendance day staff development activities included: having manuals and workshop materials available for wide distribution; merging training for Project Giant Step and New York State prekindergarten program staff; providing training more specific to various staff roles; setting up opportunities for off-site visits; and holding additional workshops on curriculum development.

IV. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN

"Children in the preschool environment need a rich, supportive learning environment where they can explore, discover, manipulate, talk freely, build, create, and grow intellectually, emotionally and socially." (New York City Board of Education, 1986). This is the sort of environment Project Giant Step aimed to create. The classroom environment created by new Project Giant Step sites, and the extent to which it fostered developmentally appropriate educational activities, are discussed in this chapter. Information is presented on the types of supplies and equipment observed in Project Giant Step classrooms, classroom arrangement, classroom activities, and adult-child interactions.

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment, and supplies for new Project Giant Step classrooms were ordered during the summer by the Board of Education's Early Childhood Education Unit for availability when school opened in September. In addition, money was provided for project staff to purchase additional supplies during the school year.

OREA field consultants used a standardized checklist to record: a) the equipment and materials available to the children; b) the materials and equipment used by the children during the observation; c) classroom displays; and d) the

organization of materials and equipment in interest areas. (A copy of the checklist can be found in Appendix A.)

Field consultants also used a modified version of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), (Harms & Clifford, 1980), a scale developed for use by early childhood center staff as a self-assessment instrument and by researchers to assess program quality in a number of centers. A consensus of early childhood professionals considered the items on the ECERS critical to a quality early childhood program. The modified ECERS consisted of 20 items which were scored on a scale from one (inadequate) to seven (excellent). See Appendix B.

Mean scores on the ECERS are shown in Table 7. Almost half of the classrooms (42 percent) had ratings of six or seven. In order to receive the highest score, classrooms had to be well-furnished, well-maintained, and spacious enough to avoid appearing overcrowded. Overall the Project Giant Step classrooms received a mean score of 5.38 on Routine Furnishings; this indicates that the classrooms were furnished with sufficient child-sized equipment and were also clean and well-maintained.

All the Project Giant Step classrooms had access to a child-sized sink, and 85 percent had children's bathrooms located in the classroom. (See Table 8.) Almost all classrooms (92 percent) had places for the children to store their own possessions. About half of the classrooms (54 percent) had cushions or mats for the children to use when sitting on the floor during group activities, while 27 percent had large rugs for the same purpose.

TABLE 7

Mean Scores on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* for Project Giant Step Classrooms, 1987-88

Item	Mean Scores (N=26)
Extent of Contact with Parents and Children Upon Arrival and Departure	4.77
Meals/Snack	5.00
Routine Furnishings	5.38
Furnishings for Relaxation/Comfort	3.35
Room Arrangement (Interest Centers)	4.65
Displays (Individual Child vs. Commercial)	4.54
Teacher-Child-Made Materials**	3.31
Use of Equipment/Materials to Encourage Reasoning	4.61
Encouragement of Oral Language	4.88
Availability of Equipment/Materials to Develop Fine Motor Skills	5.35
Adequacy of Space Outdoor/Indoor for Gross Motor Activities	3.81
Appropriateness/Availability of Gross Motor Equipment	3.31
Extent of Regular Opportunity for Gross Motor Activity	4.77
Supervision of Gross Motor Activities	5.62***
Art Materials: Availability of Materials and Opportunity for Independent Use	4.42
Block Building: Availability and Space for Use	5.50
Dramatic Play Props: Variety and Diversity	4.23
Supervision/Encouragement of Creative Activities (art, blocks, dramatic play)	5.75
Group Time: Variability of Large vs. Small Group Activity	5.54
Cultural Awareness: Evidence of Multi-Cultural Non-Sexist Materials and Curriculum	4.00

*Selected categories from ECERS used with consent of the authors and publishers.

**Category developed by the Early Childhood Evaluation Unit.

***Based on observations in the 13 classrooms that scheduled gross motor activities on day of observation.

TABLE 8

Percentage of Project Giant Step Classrooms in Which General Classroom Equipment was Observed and Used, 1987-88

Equipment	Project Giant Step Classrooms (N=26) Observed	Observed and Used
Child-Size Sink	100%	85%
Own Storage Space	92	50
Cooking Materials	46	4
Large Floor Covering	27	15
Individual Mats or Cushions	54	12
Cots/Mats for Rest Time	100	8
Bathroom in Classroom	85	62

The majority of classrooms had mats or rugs, but most did not have upholstered furniture, cushions or rocking chairs, and thus lacked a relaxed, homelike environment. One of the lowest mean scores on the ECERS was the 3.3 percent on furnishings for children's relaxation and comfort. Although well-furnished, most first-year classrooms did not yet have specially planned, soft "cozy" areas.

Table 9 shows the types of educational materials observed that were available for use by the children. All classrooms had building blocks, puzzles, housekeeping furniture and accessories, arts and crafts materials, and musical instruments. Woodworking equipment was ordered for all classrooms; carpentry tables were set up and available for use in 43 percent of all classrooms, yet were observed in use in only one.

TABLE 9

Percentage of Project Giant Step Classrooms in Which Educational Supplies and Equipment Were Observed and Used, 1987-88

Educational Supplies and Equipment	Project Giant Step Classrooms (n=26) Observed	Observed and Used
Games, Toys, Play Equipment		
Building Blocks - Unit	100%	84%
Building Blocks - Hollow	89	27
Small Toys	100	77
Construction Toys	100	69
Puzzles (Manipulatives)	100	73
Games	84	12
Easels	100	46
Arts and Crafts Materials	100	77
Housekeeping Furniture	100	88
Housekeeping Accessories	100	92
Dramatic Play Materials	62	27
Carpentry Materials	43	4
Sand Table	65	15
Water Table	92	77
Small Play Equipment	57	42
Indoor Large Play Equipment	58	31
Outdoor Large Play Equipment	54	12
Audio-Visual/Musical Equipment		
Tape Player/Recorder	70	35
Tapes	54	35
Record Player	54	19
Records	46	19
Piano	27	8
Musical Instruments	100	31
Head Set	16	12
Other Audio Visual or Musical Equipment	8	4
General Equipment		
Easels	100	46
Child-Size Sink	100	85
Own Storage Space	92	50
Cooking Equipment and Materials	46	4
Large Floor Covering	27	15
Individual Mats or Cushions	54	12
Cots/Mats for Rest Time	100	8
Bathroom in Classroom	85	62

Slightly over half of the classrooms had indoor or outdoor active play equipment. The relatively low ECERS score of 3.8 for gross motor equipment indicates that often playground equipment was not available, or when it was available, that it was not appropriate for prekindergarten children. Staff at many sites reported that appropriate playground equipment had been purchased for the program but had not yet been installed.

A variety of "instructional" materials were observed in the classrooms as shown in Table 10. Materials designed to teach specific academic content were used less frequently than the more open-ended educational materials that promoted "learning through play."

CLASSROOM DISPLAYS

Observers noted that the classrooms appeared friendly and inviting. They received an ECERS rating of 4.5 for classroom displays indicating that in most classrooms, children's work was displayed more than commercial or teacher-made materials. Observers found that teacher-made displays were relevant to current classroom activities. Displays were exhibited at the children's eye level.

As shown in Table 11, individual children's work was displayed in all classrooms, names and/or photographs of the children were observed in 92 percent, and displays reflecting the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the children in 50 percent. The classrooms had an average ECERS rating of 4.0 for cultural awareness, which indicates that evidence of ethnic and racial diversity was observed in the classroom materials and displays.

TABLE 10

Percentage of Project Giant Step Classrooms in Which Instructional Materials Were Observed and Used, 1987-88

Instructional Materials	Project Giant Step Classrooms (N=26) Observed	Observed and Used
Language/Reading Games	54%	23%
Language Experience Materials	30	15
Storybooks	97	58
Alphabet Charts	23	4
Experience Charts	43	8
Other Instructional Charts	43	8
Math Manipulatives	81	31
Computer	4	4
Pets	35	8
Nature Science Materials	65	23
Calendar/Weather Charts	27	8
Writing Materials	27	12

TABLE 11

Percentage of Project Giant Step Classrooms in Which Classroom Displays Were Observed, 1987-88

Classroom Displays	Classrooms (N = 26)
Children's Own Products	100%
Names/Photographs of Children	92
Displays Reflecting Children's Ethnicity	50
Materials/Equipment Reflecting Ethnicity	58
Other Displays for Children	65

CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT AND INTEREST AREAS

Interest areas are well-defined sections of the classroom in which curriculum- or theme-related materials are arranged for use by children independent of constant adult supervision. The majority of classrooms, as shown in Table 12, were observed to have five basic interest areas: an art area; an area for block play; a housekeeping/dramatic play area; an area where manipulatives and table toys were kept; and a library area. Half the classrooms also offered science/discovery areas and about a third, listening/music centers. The average score for room arrangement on the ECERS was 4.7. In the majority of the classrooms (84 percent), the category, room arrangement/interest

areas, received a good to excellent rating, which shows that the interest areas were well-defined and equipped. In the highest rated classrooms the areas were organized so that children could use the materials without direct adult supervision.

TABLE 12

Percentage of Project Giant Step Classrooms in Which Interest Areas Were Observed and Used, 1987-88

	Project Giant Step Classroors (N=26)	
Interest Areas	Observed	Observed and Used
Art	73%	50%
Blocks	100	65
Listening/Music	31	4
Library/Reading	88	42
Housekeeping/Dramatic Play	100	65
Manipulatives/Table Toys	96	69
Science/Discovery	50	8
Mathematics	8	4
Writing	12	0
Other	8	8

Classroom Activities and Grouping

OREA field staff completed 12 ten minute observations in each of the 26 classrooms. The many different classroom activities on the observation form were categorized into three major clusters for analytical purposes. The first, experiential activities, helps children develop concepts through observation, manipulation of concrete objects, and meaningful interaction with adults and other children. It includes block play, arts and crafts, puzzles and games, sand/water play, and dramatic play

(such as might occur in the housekeeping area). Group time, singing/movement, and snack time were also defined as experiential activities. Experiential activities usually do not focus on the acquisition of a specific academic skill. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1987): "Learning about math, science, social studies, health, and other content areas are all integrated through meaningful activities...." (p. 56). For example, during a single cooking activity, the children may explore differences in taste, smell, color, and texture; they may also measure the various ingredients, learn new vocabulary, or engage in dramatic play. As shown in Table 13, most instances of activity (65 percent) were experiential activities.

TABLE 13

Percentage of Instances of Classroom Activities,
Project Giant Step, 1987-88
(N = 26)

Activity	N	Percentage of Instances
Instructional	129	9.8%
Experiential		
Exploratory	501	38.1
Gross Motor	73	5.6
Routine	97	7.4
Total Experiential	671	51.0
Non-learning	230	17.5
Adult Activities not Child Related	285	21.7
TOTAL: ALL ACTIVITIES	1315	100.0%

The second category, instructional activities, differs from experiential activities mainly in emphasis. Instructional activities are defined as activities designed to teach specific academic skills in beginning reading, early writing, beginning mathematics, oral language, social studies, and science. Both experiential and instructional activities are considered productive educational activities.

Activities that are not educational for the children are categorized as non-learning activities. These include: necessary classroom management and transition activities; inappropriate social interaction and observing; negative interaction and discipline; and off-task behavior (e.g., an unoccupied child, or time spent out of the room). Most non-learning activities were coded as classroom management or transition activities. Observers noted few instances of negative interaction or discipline. Adult activities that were not child-related were coded separately.

As shown in Table 14, the majority of experiential activities involved children engaged in exploratory or fantasy play, either individually or in small groups. In 74 percent of the instances, children were independent of direct adult supervision. As would be expected, group time, singing, and snack activities more often involved the whole class. Although the site visits were made in the spring when the weather was pleasant, little active or outdoor play was observed.

TABLE 14

Percentage of Instances of Experiential Activities in Project Giant Step Classrooms, by Classroom Grouping Patterns, 1987-88

Experiential Activities	One Child	Small Group	Large Group	Total
Exploratory/Fantasy				
Arts & Crafts	6.6%	10.0%	0.0%	16.6%
Puzzles/ Table Games	5.0	8.5	0.0	13.5
Sand/ Water Play	2.0	11.2	0.0	13.2
Blocks	3.1	8.8	0.0	11.9
Dramatic Play/ Housekeeping	4.3	13.7	0.0	18.0
Gross Motor				
Active Play	1.0	3.7	1.5	6.2
Outdoor Play	1.0	2.8	1.5	5.3
Routines				
Group Time	0.0	1.0	3.6	4.6
Singing	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5
Snack	1.0	3.6	4.6	9.2
Total	24.0	63.3	12.7	100.0%

Compared to experiential activities, relatively few instances of directed instructional activities were observed. As shown in Table 15, the majority of instructional activities were designed to teach oral language skills (42 percent) or beginning reading (33.3 percent). For oral language activities, the children worked with the teacher either in a large group or with the whole class. Children engaged in beginning reading activities, such as looking at books, usually worked individually, or in small groups independently of adults.

ADULT-CHILD INTERACTIONS

Although it is generally expected that prekindergarten children will practice communication skills by interacting with their peers, they must also have sufficient opportunities to interact with adults, who help to instill the language children need to learn and talk about their experiences. In Project Giant Step classrooms, teachers were most often observed working with the children in experiential activities. (See Table 16.) When they were involved in exploratory activities, they tended to interact with small groups of children. If teachers conducted routine activities such as group time, singing, or snack, they usually involved the whole class. In almost a quarter of the observations (23 percent), the teachers were engaged in activities that did not involve the children. Teacher activities that did not involve children included classroom management tasks, social interaction with other adults, observing, activities outside the classroom, and transitional activities.

TABLE 15

Percentage of Instances of Instructional Activities in Project Giant Step Classrooms, by Classroom Grouping Patterns, 1987-88

Instructional Activities	One Child	Small Group	Large Group	Total
Beginning Reading	18.6%	11.6%	3.1%	33.3%
Early Writing	1.5	.8	0.0	2.3
Beginning Math Awareness	6.2	1.5	0.0	7.7
Oral Language	5.4	13.2	23.4	42.0
Social Studies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Science	5.4	7.8	1.5	14.7
Total	37.1	34.9	8.0	100.0%

TABLE 16

Percentages of Instances of Activities Involving
Project Giant Step Teachers by Classroom Grouping Patterns, 1987-88

Activity	One Child		Small Group		Large Group		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Instructional	6	1.9%	15	4.8%	29	9.3%	50	16.0%
Experiential								
Exploratory	17	5.4	43	13.8	1	0.3	61	19.6
Gross Motor	1	0.3	6	1.9	13	4.2	20	6.4
Routine	0	0.0	7	2.2	48	15.4	55	17.6
Total Experiential	18	5.8	56	17.9	62	19.9	136	43.6
Non-Learning	27	8.7	9	2.8	27	5.5	53	17.0
Not Child-Related	--		--		--		73	23.4
TOTAL: ALL ACTIVITIES	51	16.3%	80	25.6%	108	34.6%	312	100.0%

When educational assistants interacted with the children (see Table 17), they were usually involved with small groups of children in exploratory types of experiential activities. The educational assistants were observed engaging in activities that did not involve the children twice as often (56 percent) as the teachers (23 percent). When these activities were examined, 36 percent were coded as classroom management, 32 percent as observing, 23 percent as activities outside of the classroom, six percent as social interaction, and three percent as transitional activities. The educational assistants were often responsible for meal and snack preparation and other classroom management activities carried out while the teacher worked with the children.

In conclusion, classroom observation data indicate that the new Project Giant Step classrooms were organized to foster developmentally appropriate activities. Classrooms were well stocked with a variety of age-appropriate materials and equipment. Experiential activities were predominant in the Project Giant Step classrooms. The children were most often observed working individually or in small groups in a variety of exploratory activities that maximized opportunities for interaction with their peers. Although observed less frequently, instructional activities were designed to develop oral language skills and beginning literacy.

TABLE 17

Percentage of Instances of Activities Involving Project Giant Step Educational Assistants, by Classroom Grouping Patterns, 1987-88

Activity	One Child		Small Group		Large Group		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Instructional	7	2.4%	11	3.5%	4	1.4%	22	7.5%
Experiential								
Exploratory	14	4.8	41	14.0	0	0.0	55	18.8
Gross Motor	2	0.7	3	1.0	4	1.4	9	3.1
Routine	1	0.3	7	2.4	6	1.0	14	4.8
Total Experiential	17	5.8	51	17.5	10	3.4	78	26.7
Non-Learning	14	4.8	11	3.7	3	1.0	28	9.6
Not Child-Related	--		--		--		164	56.2
TOTAL: ALL ACTIVITIES	38	13.0%	73	25.0%	17	5.8%	292	100.0%

V. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Project Giant Step guidelines contained several goals concerning children's families. One goal was to increase parental involvement. Another was to provide social service support for children and their families. This section discusses how these goals were implemented in the new sites.

INVOLVING PARENTS IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

In general, the majority of Project Giant Step staff (69 percent of the teachers and educational assistants and 78 percent of the family assistants) believed that their program came fairly close to the goals of involving parents and providing them with positive feelings about their children's education.

The family assistants were the staff members primarily responsible for parental involvement. Family assistants spent most of their time setting up and supervising the family room, a room in the school set aside for family activities. Other family assistant activities included conducting workshops, obtaining resources for parents, holding parent conferences, visiting families at home, and paperwork.

Staff reported several ways in which they encouraged parental participation. Fifty-six percent of the family assistants and 65 percent of the teachers said the most frequent method was through personal contact with parents at arrival and dismissal time. Only a few family assistants (17 percent) indicated that home visits were used to engage parents, while 27

percent of the teaching staff mentioned home visits as a strategy they used to bring parents closer to the Giant Step program. Home visits by the family assistant tended to be used to provide social services to parents and to follow up on absences.

Parents accompanied the Project Giant Step classes on trips and participated in special planned activities. In one school, a family assistant established a relationship with the Parent Teacher Association. In another, a teacher specialist described the exceptional job a family assistant had done in getting parents involved in a school where once people thought it couldn't be done.

Positive feelings about parental involvement in the program usually occurred when the site had a fully functioning family assistant at the beginning of the school year. In three sites there were still family assistant vacancies at the end of the year. In two other sites the family assistants were unclear about the goals of the parent involvement component and/or their role in it.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR FAMILIES

There were difficulties in effectively implementing the social service component in several sites. Social workers or psychologists were available in approximately three-quarters of the sites. There were, however, problems with space and facilities (e.g., telephone) and, in some cases, there were time constraints for social workers.

When the supportive service component was functioning properly at a site, the social worker and crisis intervention personnel worked with the family assistant on planning and analyzing home visits, identifying family strengths, and keeping appropriate records.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the recent growth of educational programs for preschool age children, there is a parallel need to ensure that the programs are of high quality. In 1986 the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published guidelines for the establishment of quality early childhood educational programs. These guidelines have become the criteria used for the establishment of quality early childhood programs, as well as the benchmark for their measurement and evaluation (Bredekamp, 1987).

Our conclusions and recommendations for the 1987-88 expansion sites are similar to those stated for the 1986-87 veteran sites. We concluded in each case that Project Giant Step sites operated in agreement with program guidelines and with NAEYC's standards in the areas of classroom staffing, educational programming for children, staff development, parental involvement, and supportive health and social services. In both years, the program was established for the first time in several schools: in 1986-87, the project was initiated in 14 schools; it was expanded to involve a total of 51 schools in 1987-88. OREA found that there appear to be several problems, most of which are endemic to the program's first year of operation at a school.

First, schools were not informed that Project Giant Step would be in their school until late August or early September. This did not leave much time for hiring and training staff, recruiting and enrolling children, and setting up classrooms for the start-up of the program in November. As a result, Project

Giant Step programs tended to be underenrolled and understaffed during the first year. Fortunately, these problems showed signs of correcting themselves during the program's second year.

Another problem that is particularly difficult during the first year concerns the roles of Project Giant Step staff and their relationships with the school staff. As was found in the 1986-87 evaluation report, when new personnel-- for example, teacher specialists, family assistants, and now, early childhood supervisors--join a school, roles and relationships must be adjusted and delineated. In time, as trust develops, relationships, coordination of activities, and communication improve. The need for making adjustments can be expected in a new program; however, it is important to take steps to ensure a smooth transition.

OREA recommends better communication by Project Giant Step personnel to district and school-based personnel. This communication can be realized through preservice activities planned for district and school-based administrators to discuss project roles and relationships and the philosophy of Project Giant Step.

Finally a problem which apparently was not corrected during the second year is low attendance. We recommend that research be conducted to discover why Project Giant Step classrooms are attended less often than other New York City half-day prekindergarten programs. In the meantime, OREA recommends

careful monitoring and the development of school-based strategies to improve attendance.

Several psychologists and educators (Elkind, 1981; Winn, 1983) have voiced their concerns about programs for four-year-olds, especially programs run by public schools (Ames, 1980; Zigler, 1987). Many people fear that instructional programs for four-year-olds will be modeled on programs for kindergartners, which have become more and more academic in nature. Futrell (1987) emphasizes that structured play should constitute the curriculum for four-year-olds. "Structured play--play that enlivens the imagination and exercises the intellect--is the indispensable prerequisite for the development of critical thinking skills fundamental to academic achievement" (p. 252).

OREA found evidence of such "structured play" in the sample Project Giant Step classrooms which were visited. The materials checklist and the ECERS showed classrooms contained the necessary diversity of materials and equipment to gain the interest of the children. Children were observed using materials and equipment that maximized opportunities for social interaction and play with their peers. The picture of classroom activities obtained from the observation forms showed children engaged mainly in experiential activities, especially exploratory or fantasy play.

We conclude that Project Giant Step, despite the aforementioned concerns, was successful in providing quality educational experiences for four-year-olds. When we compare program implementation against the standards for high quality

early childhood programs established by NAEYC, we conclude that Project Giant Step has the potential to become a model high quality prekindergarten program that can serve as a paradigm for early childhood educators in New York City and throughout the nation.

APPENDICES

FORM A: CLASSROOM INFORMATION Appendix A

Part I. **Classroom Summary Information**

Class Code [ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ] (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) Observer _____ [ ][ ] (9 10)

Grade: Pre-K [ ] (11) Kind. [ ] (12) 1st Gr. [ ] (13) Time in Class _____ to _____

Register-Class Observed [ ][ ] (14 15) # Present Today [ ][ ] (16 17) Bilingual [ ] (18) Bridge [ ] (19)

Staff Assigned: Teacher [ ] (20) E.A./Para [ ] (21) F.A. [ ] (22) Other _____ (specify) [ ] (23)

Staff Present: Teacher [ ] (24) E.A./Para [ ] (25) F.A. [ ] (26) Other _____ (specify) [ ] (27)

Part II. **Equipment, Materials, Classroom Organization**
For each item below, enter 0 if not seen in classroom, enter 1 if seen, 2 if used today.

A. GAMES, TOYS, PLAY EQUIPMENT

building blocks - unit	___ ( ) 28
building blocks - hollow	___ ( ) 29
small toys (trucks cars, dolls)	___ ( ) 30
construction toys	___ ( ) 31
puzzles, other manipulatives	___ ( ) 32
games	___ ( ) 33
housekeeping furniture	___ ( ) 34
housekeeping accessories	___ ( ) 35
dramatic play materials (puppets, doll house)	___ ( ) 36
carpentry materials	___ ( ) 37
sand table	___ ( ) 38
water table	___ ( ) 39
small play equipment (balls, ropes)	___ ( ) 40
indoor large play equipment (climber)	___ ( ) 41
outdoor large play equipment	___ ( ) 42

B. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

arts and crafts materials	___ ( ) 43
language reading games	___ ( ) 44
math manipulatives	___ ( ) 45
children's textbooks, workbooks	___ ( ) 46
storybooks, magazines	___ ( ) 47
language experience materials	___ ( ) 48
writing materials	___ ( ) 49
pet(s)	___ ( ) 50
nature/science materials	___ ( ) 51
calendar/weather chart(s)	___ ( ) 52
alphabet chart(s)	___ ( ) 53
experience charts	___ ( ) 54
other instructional charts	___ ( ) 55
typewriter	___ ( ) 56
computer	___ ( ) 57
other _____ (specify)	___ ( ) 58

C. AUDIO, VISUAL, MUSICAL EQUIPMENT

tape player/recorder	___ ( ) 59
tapes	___ ( ) 60
record player	___ ( ) 61
records	___ ( ) 62
piano	___ ( ) 63
musical instruments	___ ( ) 64
head set(s)	___ ( ) [illegible]
other _____ (specify)	___ ( ) 66

D. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

children's own products on display	___ ( ) 67
names/photographs of children	___ ( ) 68
displays reflecting children's ethnicity	___ ( ) 69
materials equipment reflecting ethnicity	___ ( ) 70
other displays especially for children	___ ( ) 71
self-management chart(s)	___ ( ) 72

E. GENERAL EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS

easel(s)	___ ( ) 73
child-size or child-adapted sink	___ ( ) 74
child's own storage space	___ ( ) 75
cooking equipment and materials	___ ( ) 76
large floor covering	___ ( ) 77
individual mats or cushions	___ ( ) 78
cots/mats for rest time	___ ( ) 79
bathroom in classroom	___ ( ) 80

F. INTEREST/LEARNING AREAS

art	___ ( ) 81
blocks	___ ( ) 82
listening/music	___ ( ) 83
library/reading	___ ( ) 84
housekeeping/dramatics	___ ( ) 85
manipulatives/table toys	___ ( )
science/discovery center	___ ( )
mathematics	___ ( )
writing	___ ( )
other _____ (specify)	___ ( )

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APPENDIX B

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Early Childhood Unit

FORM C

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Adapted: Spring, 1988

Adapted from: Early Childhood Environment
Rating Scale
by Thelma Harms and Richard M. Clifford
Spring 1980

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Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal Care Routines							
1. Greeting/departing	No plans made. Greeting children is often neglected; departure not prepared for.		Informally understood that someone will greet and acknowledge departure.		Plans made to insure warm greeting and organized departure. Staff member(s) assigned responsibility for greeting and departure of children. (Ex. Conversation on arrival; art work and clothes ready for departure).		Everything in 5 (Good) plus parents greeted as well as children. Staff use greeting and departure as information sharing time to relate warmly to parents.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Meals/snacks	Meals/snacks served on a haphazard, irregular schedule and of questionable nutritional value.		Well balanced meals/snacks provided on a regular schedule but strict atmosphere, stress on conformity, meals not used as a pleasant social time or to build self help skills (Ex. pouring milk, setting table, etc.)		Well balanced meals/snacks provided on regular schedule. Staff member(s) sits with children and provides pleasant social environment during meals and when possible at snacks. Small group size permits conversation.		Everything in 5 plus time planned as a learning experience, including self help skills; talking about children's interests, events of the day, and aspects of foods (color and where foods come from).
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Furnishings and Display for Children							
3. For routine care (Eating, storage of child's possessions, general conditions of room). Basic materials: child sized* tables and chairs, cubbies or other place for storing child's things.	Insufficient number of pieces of furniture for eating, storage of child's possessions. Room lacks adequate lighting, ventilation, or other basics.		Sufficient number of pieces of routine care furniture, but wrong size or in disrepair. Poor maintenance of room (Ex. dirty floors, walls need paint).		Sufficient number of pieces of child sized routine care furniture in good repair. Floors and walls well maintained.		Everything in 5 plus furnishings are well cared for (Ex. clean cubbies). Furnishings do not overcrowd room.

SAMPLE SCORING STRIP

1. Greeting/departing
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Meals/snacks
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Furnishings (routine
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Item	1 2	3 4	5 6	7
4. For relaxation and comfort	No upholstered furniture, cushions, rugs, or rocking chair available for children to use. Lack of awareness of child's need for "softness" in environment.	No planned cozy area for children, although rug may be provided in child's play space or some upholstered furniture available to child.	Planned cozy area regularly available to children (Ex. rug, cushions, child sized rocker, adult rocker, or upholstered furniture). Cozy area may be used for reading, dramatic play, etc.	Planned cozy area plus "softness" available in several other areas (Ex. cushions in reading corner and doll house, several rug areas, many soft toys).
5. Room arrangement	No interest centers defined. Room inconveniently arranged (Ex. traffic patterns interfere with activities). Materials with similar use not placed together.	One or two interest centers defined, but centers not well placed in room (Ex. quiet and noisy activities near one another, water not accessible where needed). Supervision of centers difficult, or materials disorganized.	Three or more interest centers defined and conveniently equipped (Ex. water provided, shelving adequate). Quiet and noisy centers separated. Appropriate play space provided in each center (Ex. rug or table area out of flow of traffic). Easy visual supervision of centers.	Everything in 5 plus centers selected to provide a variety of learning experiences. Arrangement of centers designed to promote independent use by children (Ex. labeled open shelves, convenient drying space for art work). Additional materials organized and available to add to or change centers.
6. Child related display	No materials displayed or inappropriate materials for age group predominate (Ex. materials designed for school aged children or church materials).	Commercial materials or teacher made display predominate (Ex. nursery rhymes, ABC's, numbers or seasonal displays not closely related to children's current activities).	Children's work predominates. Some uniform work may be displayed (Ex. same project done by all). Teacher made display relates closely to current activities (Ex. charts, pictures, or photos about recent activities, projects, and trips). Many items displayed on child's eye level.	Individualized children's work predominates: variety of materials and topics. Three dimensional objects (playdough, clay, carpentry) displayed as well as flat work.

SAMPLE SCORING STR

4. Furnishings (relaxation)

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Room arrangem

1 2 3 4 5 6

6. Child related display

1 2 3 4 5 6

Item	1 2	3 4	5 6	7
7 Teacher/child-made materials	No, or limited, evidence of teacher/child made materials (aside from child writing/math assignments or some teacher-made bulletin board displays).	Some teacher-made materials (instructional or other charts, number lines, a reading area, or picture file).	A variety of teacher-made materials in some areas of the classroom (games, experience/theme materials) and some child-made materials (books, curriculum-related constructions or charts).	Everything in 5 plus evidence that teacher and children create materials to extend children's learning in many curriculum areas.
8 Using learning concepts (reasoning) Materials Preschool sequence cards, same different games, size and shape toys, sorting games.	1 2 No games, materials or activities to extend and encourage reasoning (Ex. no matching, sequencing, categorizing, etc.).	3 4 Some games, materials or activities present, but not used with teacher guidance or not readily available.	5 6 Sufficient games, materials, and activities available on a regular basis. Children use by choice with teacher available to assist in developing concepts by talking to a child and asking questions to stimulate child's reasoning.	7 Everything in 5 plus a plan for introducing concepts as children are ready, either individually or in groups. Teacher encourages children to reason throughout the day, using actual events and experiences as a basis for concept development (Ex. children learn sequence by talking about their experiences in the daily routine, or recalling the sequence of a cooking project).
9 Informal use of language	1 2 Language outside of group times primarily used by staff to control children's behavior and manage routines.	3 4 Staff sometimes talks with children in conversation, but children are asked primarily "yes/no" or short answer questions. Children's talk not encouraged.	5 6 Staff/child conversations are frequent. Language is primarily used by staff to exchange information with children and for social interaction. Children are asked "why, how, what if" questions, responding longer and more complex answers.	7 Staff makes conscious effort to have an informal conversation with each child every day. Staff verbally expands on ideas presented by children (Ex. adds information, asks questions to encourage child to talk more).

SAMPLE SCORING STRIP

7 Teacher/child-made materials

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 Reasoning

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9 Informal language

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Fine and Gross Motor Activities							
10. Perceptual/fine motor **Materials** Preschool: beads, puzzles, Leggo and small building toys, scissors, crayons.	No developmentally appropriate fine motor/perceptual materials available for daily use.		Some developmentally appropriate perceptual/fine motor materials available for daily use		Variety of developmentally appropriate perceptual/fine motor materials in good repair used daily by children.		Everything in 5 plus materials organized to encourage self help; activities planned to enhance fine motor skills.
11. Space for gross motor	No outdoor or indoor space specifically set aside for gross motor/physical play		Some space specifically set aside outdoors or indoors for gross motor/physical play		Adequate space outdoors and some space indoors with planned safety precautions (Ex. cushioning ground cover under climbing equipment, fenced in area, proper drainage)		Planned, adequate, safe, varied, and pleasant space both outdoors *and* indoors (Ex: appropriate ground covers: sand, black top, wood chips; shade in summer, sun in winter, wind break, etc.). Indoor space used in bad weather.
12. Gross motor equipment	Little gross motor equipment, in poor repair, or not age appropriate		Some appropriate gross motor equipment, but seldom in use (Ex: inaccessible, requires daily moving or set up) or little variety in equipment		Gross motor equipment is readily available and sturdy; stimulates variety of skills (Ex: crawling, walking, balancing, climbing). Building and dramatic play equipment included in gross motor areas		Everything in 5 plus equipment is imaginative, flexible, frequently rearranged by staff and children to maintain interest. Several different pieces of equipment on different levels of skill.

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SAMPLE SCORING STRIP

10. Fine motor
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. GM space
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. GM equipment
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13 Scheduled time for gross motor activities	No scheduled physical activity time outdoors or indoors.		Occasional scheduled physical activity time.		Regularly scheduled physical activity time daily, morning or afternoon		Regularly scheduled daily physical activity times with some age appropriate planned physical activity (Ex. play with balls, bean bag games, follow the leader, obstacle course) as well as informal play time.
14 Supervision (gross motor activities)	No supervision provided near gross motor area		Supervision provided but attention to children is minimal (Ex. adult seated at distance from children, attention divided with other tasks, several adults chatting, etc.)		Supervision provided near children. Attention mainly to safety of children.		Supervisor talks to children about ideas related to their play, helps with resources to enhance play, and builds social skills. When appropriate, concepts such as near far, fast slow, up down are related to children's activities.
Creative Activities*							
15. Art	Few art materials available; regimented use of materials (Ex. mostly teacher directed projects). Art materials not readily available for children to use as a free choice activity		Some materials, primarily drawing and painting, available for free choice, but major emphasis on projects that are like an example shown		Individual expression and free choice encouraged with art materials. Very few projects that are like an example shown		Variety of materials available for free choice, including three dimensional materials (Ex. clay, art dough). Attempt to relate art activities to other experiences.

SAMPLE SCORING STRIP

13. GM time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. Supervision (GM)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. Art

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Item	1 2	3 4	5 6	7
16. Blocks	Few blocks and accessories. Not enough space to play with blocks.	No special block area set aside, but space available for block play. Blocks and accessories enough for at least two children to play at one time.	Special block area set aside out of traffic with convenient storage. Space, blocks, and accessories for three or more children at one time. Area must be available at least 50 minutes a day.	Special block area with suitable surface (Ex. flat rug). Variety of large and small blocks and accessories, with storage organized to encourage independent use (Ex. with pictures on shelves to show where blocks belong).
17. Dramatic play	1 2	3 4	5 6	7
	No special provisions made for dress up or dramatic play.	Dramatic play props focused on housekeeping roles. Little or no provisions for dramatic play involving transportation, work, or adventure.	Variety of dramatic play props including transportation, work, adventure, fantasy. Space provided in the room and outside the room permitting more active play (either outdoors or in a multipurpose room or gym).	Everything in 5 plus pictures, stories, trips, used to enrich dramatic play.
18. Supervision (creative activities)	1 2	3 4	5 6	7
	No supervision provided, except if problems occur.	Supervision provided but attention to children is minimal (Ex. attention divided with other tasks, several adults chatting, etc.).	Supervision provided near children. Attention mainly to safety, cleanliness, proper use of materials.	Teacher interacts with children, discusses ideas and helps with resources to enhance play. Recognition of the sensitive balance between child's need to explore independently and adult's opportunity to extend learning.

SAMPLE SCORING STRIP

16. Blocks
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. Dramatic play
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. Supervision (creative)
1 2 3 4 5 6

Item	1 2	3 4	5 6	7
19. Group time	Children kept together as whole group most of the day. Few opportunities for adult to interact with one to three children while other children involved in various free choice activities.	Some free play available between group activities; however, all planned activities done as whole group (Ex. all do same art project, read story, listen to record at the same time).	Planning done for small group as well as large group activities. Whole group gatherings limited to *short periods* suited to age and abilities of children.	Everything in 5 plus different groupings planned to provide a change of pace throughout the day. One to one adult-child activities included. Free play and small groups predominate.
20. Cultural awareness	No attempt to include ethnic and racial variety in dolls, book illustrations, or pictorial bulletin board materials. All toys and visible pictures are of one race only.	Some evidence of ethnic and racial variety in toys and pictorial materials (Ex. multi racial or multi cultural dolls, books or bulletin board pictures of varied countries and races).	Cultural awareness evidenced by liberal inclusion of multi racial and non sexist materials (Ex. dolls, illustrations in story books, and pictorial bulletin board materials).	Everything in 5 plus cultural awareness is part of curriculum through planned use of both multi racial and non sexist materials. (Ex. cooking of ethnic foods, introducing a variety of roles for women and men through stories and dramatic play).

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SAMPLE SCORING STRIP

19. Group time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. Cultural awareness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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